



Implementation of Local Wisdom Values in the Economic Empowerment of Poor Communities in Bone Bolango

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the implementation of local wisdom values in the economic empowerment of poor communities in Bone Bolango Regency. This research is motivated by the fact that poverty alleviation is not only determined by economic factors, but also by socio-cultural forces that grow and develop in society. Local wisdom such as mutual cooperation, deliberation, social solidarity, and community cooperation remains potential social pillars to strengthen the empowerment of poor communities. This study uses a qualitative descriptive approach with informants including local government officials, community leaders, MSMEs actors, and community beneficiaries of empowerment programs. Data were obtained through in-depth interviews, field observations, and documentation, then analyzed using the interactive model of Miles and Huberman. The results show that local wisdom values are implemented through community-based collective economic practices, mutual cooperation mechanisms in production and marketing activities, and strengthening local socio-economic institutions. These values contribute to increasing economic independence, social cohesion, and the sustainability of poor community businesses. This study recommends that local governments integrate local wisdom values into economic empowerment policies systematically and sustainably.

Keywords: local wisdom, economic empowerment, poor communities, Bone Bolango, regional development

Introduction

Poverty remains a fundamental issue in regional development, particularly in areas with distinct social and cultural characteristics, such as Bone Bolango Regency. Poverty alleviation efforts have tended to focus on economic aspects and material assistance, while the socio-cultural dimensions inherent in society are often overlooked. Yet, various studies have shown that local wisdom can be an effective social resource in building the economic resilience of poor communities (Koentjaraningrat, 2002; Geertz, 1973).

Local wisdom is a system of values, norms, and social practices passed down through generations and serves to maintain harmony between humans and their environment. In the Bone Bolango context, values such as *mosantapu* (mutual cooperation), *momuhuto* (mutual assistance), and *huyula* (social solidarity) remain prevalent in everyday community practices. These values can serve as important social capital in strengthening community economies and improving the well-being of the poor.

Conventional top-down development approaches to poverty alleviation programs often position communities as the objects of policy intervention. This model emphasizes resource transfer and the achievement of short-term economic indicators, but often ignores the socio-cultural dimensions that shape community economic behavior. As a result, many empowerment programs are unsustainable due to low participation, a weak sense of ownership, and a mismatch between program design and local social realities. In this context, economic empowerment based on local wisdom emerges as an innovative and contextual alternative approach. Local wisdom is understood as a system of values, norms, and social practices that have been internalized and function as social capital in community life. Values such as mutual cooperation, deliberation, and social solidarity not only have cultural significance but also play a strategic role in overcoming limited access to capital, information, and productive resources among poor communities.

Theoretically, this approach aligns with the people-centered development paradigm, which positions communities as the primary actors in development. Empowerment is not understood solely as increasing income, but rather as a process of strengthening community capacity, independence, and socio-economic institutions. By integrating local values into program design, the empowerment process becomes more participatory, adaptive, and rooted in existing social structures, thereby increasing the effectiveness and sustainability of development interventions. Therefore, empowerment based on local wisdom can be positioned as both a critique and a correction to the limitations of top-down development approaches. This model bridges the gap between formal policies and community social practices and encourages a transformation from an aid-based approach to development based on the internal strengths of communities. In areas with strong social cohesion such as Bone Bolango Regency, this approach has high empirical and theoretical relevance as a sustainable economic development strategy for poor communities.

However, the challenge is how to integrate local wisdom values into modern, market-oriented economic empowerment programs. Without such integration, empowerment

programs often operate mechanically, top-down, and lack the social context of the local community. Therefore, this study aims to examine the implementation of local wisdom values in the economic empowerment of poor communities in Bone Bolango Regency and analyze their contribution to improving community welfare. "Implementation" does not refer primarily to the adoption of formal policies at the regulatory level, but rather to community practices and institutional integration at the local level, manifested through the design and implementation of economic empowerment programs based on social values already present in the community. The implementation of local wisdom is reflected in the way the values of mosantapu, momuhuto, and huyula are operationalized in daily economic activities, such as collective work in production and marketing, business decision-making through deliberation, and joint business management through local business groups and cooperatives that align with local social norms. Therefore, implementation in the context of this research is more appropriately understood as an integrative process, in which cultural values are translated into economic empowerment practices and reinforced through local socio-economic institutions, rather than solely as top-down policies or government administrative interventions.

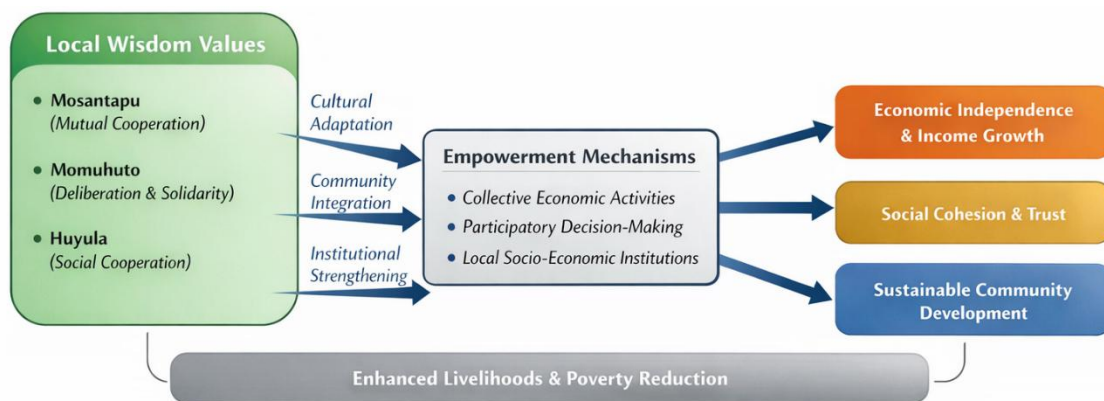


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework: *Translating Local Wisdom Values into Empowerment Practice*

According to Geertz (1973), local wisdom is a form of knowledge and social values that serve as guidelines for a community's economic, social, and cultural behavior. Koentjaraningrat (2002) emphasized that local wisdom not only serves to preserve culture but can also be a source of social innovation in community economic development. In the Bone Bolango context, values such as mutual cooperation and deliberation have a strong collective economic function, particularly in overcoming limitations in capital and access to resources.

According to Mardikanto (2015), community empowerment is a process of increasing the capacity and independence of communities to manage their resources. Chambers (1997) emphasized that empowerment must be oriented toward people-centered development, which positions communities as subjects, not objects, of development. In the context of poverty, economic empowerment must include strengthening individual capacity, local institutions, and access to productive resources.

Integrating local wisdom into economic empowerment means adapting social values such as togetherness, solidarity, and collective work into economic program design. Hidayat (2020)

stated that the success of empowerment programs in many regions is largely determined by the alignment of cultural values with the approach used. Therefore, implementing local wisdom values can strengthen community ownership, trust, and participation in the empowerment process. This study draws on classic works in social science and anthropology, such as Clifford Geertz's thinking on the meaning of culture and Koentjaraningrat's thinking on local wisdom as a value system that shapes social behavior, to build a conceptual foundation for the role of culture in economic activity. At the same time, this research integrates contemporary studies on community empowerment, people-centered development, and community-based development, which emphasize participation, capacity building, and sustainability. This combination demonstrates an effort to bridge classical theories that emphasize structural and cultural understandings of society with more applicable and policy-sensitive contemporary approaches, resulting in an analysis that is not only conceptually robust but also relevant to current local economic development challenges.

Methods

This research uses a qualitative descriptive approach with the aim of understanding social phenomena in depth and context. A descriptive qualitative research approach was used to deeply understand the processes, meanings, and social contexts of local wisdom implementation in the economic empowerment of poor communities, which cannot be adequately explained through quantitative measurements alone. Local wisdom such as *mosantapu*, *momuhuto*, and *huyula* are living, contextual, and internalized social values and practices within the community's social relations. Therefore, an interpretive approach is needed to capture the dynamics of actors, collective interactions, and the accompanying social mechanisms. Through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and document analysis, a descriptive qualitative approach allows researchers to describe how these values are translated into real economic practices, how communities interpret empowerment, and how these social processes contribute to economic independence and social cohesion. Thus, this approach aligns with the characteristics of the phenomenon under study and the people-centered development paradigm, which places community experiences and perspectives as the primary source of scientific knowledge. The research location was selected in Bone Bolango Regency, Gorontalo Province, because this area has strong socio-cultural potential in the form of well-preserved local wisdom practices.

This research starts from the assumption that social reality—particularly the meaning of local wisdom and economic empowerment practices—is not objective and singular, but rather socially constructed through the interactions, experiences, and interpretations of local actors. Knowledge is generated through a process of interpreting the perspectives of informants, such as local government officials, community leaders, MSMEs, and beneficiaries, who are understood as subjects actively constructing the meaning of empowerment within the socio-cultural context of Bone Bolango. The use of in-depth interviews, participant observation, and thematic analysis emphasizes that the purpose of this research is not to test universal causal relationships, but rather to interpret how local wisdom values are internalized and operationalized in economic practices. Research informants included local

government officials (Bappeda and the Social Services Agency), village heads, community leaders, MSMEs, and poor beneficiaries of the empowerment program. Informants were selected using purposive sampling based on their direct involvement in economic empowerment activities.

Data was obtained through in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and documentation studies of government program documents, empowerment activity reports, and local customary records.

Data analysis was conducted using the interactive model of Miles and Huberman (1994), which includes three stages: (1) data reduction, (2) data presentation, and (3) drawing conclusions/verification. Data validity was tested through triangulation of sources and methods.

Results and Discussion

Gorontalo was historically part of North Sulawesi Province until it officially became an autonomous province in 2000, as a result of the decentralization and regional autonomy agenda strengthened after Indonesia's 1998 political reforms. Politically, this expansion aimed to bring government closer to local communities, increase development effectiveness, and recognize Gorontalo's distinct socio-cultural identity. In this context, Gorontalo's social structure remains heavily influenced by customary values, local leadership, and strong communal ties, which continue to play a role in public decision-making and economic development at the village level. Therefore, the practice of local wisdom-based economic empowerment in Gorontalo—as discussed in this document—cannot be separated from the political context of decentralization, which provides greater space for local governments and communities to design development strategies that align with local cultural values and social structures. Research has found that the value of *mosantapu* (mutual assistance) remains a foundation for the Bone Bolango community's economic activities. In agricultural activities, for example, communities assist each other in land preparation, harvesting, and distributing produce. This value not only reduces production costs but also strengthens social solidarity.

Based on the research findings, the implementation of local wisdom values such as *mosantapu* (mutual cooperation), *momuhuto* (deliberation and solidarity), and *huyula* (social cooperation) in the economic empowerment of poor communities in Bone Bolango Regency explicitly contributes to the achievement of several Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) targets. First, increasing economic independence, self-confidence, and sustainability of micro-enterprises based on collective work directly supports SDG 1.2 (reducing at least half the proportion of the poor population according to the national dimension), because this approach not only increases income but also the socio-economic resilience of poor households. Second, strengthening micro-enterprises and joint business groups (KUBE) that are managed in a participatory manner and according to local norms is in line with SDG 8.3, namely encouraging development policies that support productive activities, entrepreneurship, and the growth of MSMEs. Third, the practice of decision-making through deliberation, social solidarity, and increasing the participation of poor groups in local economic institutions

contributes to SDG 10.2, namely empowering and promoting social and economic inclusion of all people without discrimination. Thus, this research shows that the integration of local wisdom in economic empowerment policies is a relevant and contextual strategy to support the achievement of SDGs targets simultaneously.

Empowerment programs implemented through joint business groups (KUBE) and local cooperatives have adapted to community social norms. Economic decisions are made through deliberation and mutual agreement, reflecting the values of *momuhuto* (solidarity) and *huyula* (mutual cooperation). This fosters a sense of collective responsibility and business sustainability.

The application of local wisdom values has been proven to increase self-confidence and economic independence among poor communities. Through collective work and social support, communities can develop micro-enterprises supported by social capital, not just financial capital. This situation reinforces Friedmann's (1992) argument that true empowerment stems from the community's own internal social strength. On the other hand, potential conflicts between traditional values and the modern market economy sometimes arise, particularly in differences in orientation, logic, and decision-making mechanisms. Local wisdom values such as *mosantapu*, *momuhuto*, and *huyula* are based on the principles of collectivity, social solidarity, and deliberation, emphasizing social balance and the equitable distribution of economic benefits at the community level. In contrast, the modern market economy tends to be individualistic, competitive, and oriented toward efficiency and profit maximization. Tensions can arise when market demands—such as production speed, quality standards, and price competition—encourage economic practices that potentially undermine collective work mechanisms and social consensus. However, this research shows that such conflicts are not always antagonistic; through institutional adaptation and integration, traditional values can actually function as social buffers that moderate the impact of excessive market forces, allowing the modern economy to operate without eroding the social cohesion and cultural identity of local communities.

These findings demonstrate a transformation from an aid-based empowerment approach to a cultural values-based model. The integration of local wisdom has been shown to provide a sense of ownership of the program and increase the effectiveness of the economic sustainability of poor communities. The research also shows that local wisdom-based empowerment practices are implicitly inclusive, but have not been explicitly analyzed from a gender perspective. Values such as *mosantapu* (mutual cooperation), *momuhuto* (deliberation), and *huyula* (social solidarity) are applied in collective economic activities and joint decision-making, which normatively open up participation for all community members without gender discrimination. Women, particularly in the context of micro-enterprises and household-based economic activities, have the potential to benefit through strengthened social networks, collective support, and access to business groups. However, because the document does not specifically outline the division of roles, power relations, or the level of control women and men have over economic resources and decisions, an analytical gap remains regarding whether these benefits are equal or reproduce traditional gender-based role divisions. Thus, while local wisdom practices have the potential to support women's

empowerment, further studies that explicitly integrate a gender perspective are needed to ensure that the resulting economic empowerment is truly inclusive and equitable for both women and men.

Conclusion and Recommendation

This study concludes that local wisdom values such as *mosantapu*, *momuhuto*, and *huyula* play a crucial role in strengthening the economic empowerment of poor communities in Bone Bolango Regency. These values are implemented through collective work, deliberation, and social solidarity, which can increase economic independence and strengthen social cohesion. Local wisdom serves not only as a cultural heritage but also as strategic social capital in community economic development.

Although this study is rooted in the context of village development and regional autonomy in Indonesia, the principles demonstrated—such as the utilization of social capital, strengthening local institutions, and positioning communities as key development actors—align with the global paradigms of community-driven and people-centered development. In various international contexts, where limited state capacity and socio-cultural diversity are key development challenges, local wisdom can serve as an adaptive mechanism to bridge national policies with local practices. Thus, the results of this study contribute to the international discourse on sustainable development by demonstrating that empowerment strategies rooted in local cultural values are not only contextually relevant but also conceptually replicable across regions with similar social characteristics, provided they are adapted to local institutional structures and market dynamics.

Suggestions from this research include:

1. Regional governments need to formally integrate local wisdom values into economic empowerment policies and regional development planning.
2. Empowerment programs should involve traditional institutions and local figures so that the implementation process is more contextual and sustainable.
3. Further research is needed to examine the relationship between local wisdom and creative economic innovation as a sustainable poverty alleviation strategy.

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